Environmental studies at Bowdoin reflects the College's recognition that humans must learn to live in harmony with nature and that human activities are dependent upon natural processes. This recognition, coupled with an aspiration to present and future human well-being, provides a critical perspective from which to interpret history, science, politics, law, economy, religion, and the arts. A liberal arts education should promote environmental literacy: an understanding of the world around us—the built and the natural, the local and the global, our role in it, and our effects upon it. The goals of environmental studies at Bowdoin are twofold: to encourage broad environmental literacy through course offerings and co-curricular activities available to all students, and to build a solid foundation for the diverse environmentally related career paths our graduates will follow. For over four decades, Bowdoin’s Environmental Studies Program has been a leader among ES departments at liberal arts colleges.

Maine is a great place to study environmental issues. In addition to a beautiful and ecologically diverse location, Maine also enjoys an environmentally concerned citizenry and a strong network of environmental organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. Three convictions guide the design of the environmental studies major: first, students' academic foundation should be both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, fostering an integrated understanding; second, it should encompass perspectives from the curriculum’s three broad divisions—humanities, natural science, and social science; third, it should offer abundant opportunities for students to supplement their academic learning with experiences outside the classroom, helping them to discover their vocations and connect their academic experience to the broader environmental community. Many students take advantage of fellowships, or volunteer opportunities, as well as community-based research through courses, independent studies, and with faculty as part of ongoing research initiatives such as the “Maine Rivers, Estuaries and Coastal Fisheries” research project, adding a “real world” dimension to their academic program.

Coordinate Major and Minor

The Environmental Studies Program makes broad use of the resources of the College, and classes are taught by members of the biology, earth and oceanographic science, physics, chemistry, economics, history, art, philosophy, English, and government and legal studies faculties. The major in environmental studies is a coordinate major; students fulfill the requirements for a major in any other department of the College and also for the Environmental Studies Program. The environmental studies major requires nine courses: Introduction to Environmental Studies, a unique interdisciplinary team-taught course; an introductory level science course; three core courses: Perspectives in Environmental Science, Environment and Culture in North American History, and an environmental social science course, which could include one of the following: Comparative Environmental Policy, Environmental Law, or Natural Resource Economics. Three additional ES courses must be taken in one of the following concentrations: history, landscape, values, ethics and the environment; environmental economics and policy; interdisciplinary science; or students may design their own concentration. Finally, students select a senior seminar that provides an opportunity for students.

Facilities

The Environmental Studies Program offices are in Adams Hall and feature a common room accessible to all ES students, computers, and a seminar room. Bowdoin’s location on the Maine coast and our resources for coastal studies are extraordinary assets that offer unique opportunities. The ES Program offers courses and projects that take advantage of our location, including courses such as Fishing in the Gulf of Maine, and the Ecology of the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy.

The program makes use of the Coastal Studies Center, a 118-acre College property located twenty minutes from campus on Orr's Island in Casco Bay. Facilities include a marine biological laboratory, a dock and pier, and a terrestrial laboratory/art studio.

Bowdoin also maintains a scientific field station at Kent Island, off Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy, where students can conduct field research on ecology, animal behavior, ornithology, marine biology, botany, and meteorology. Kent Island is a major seabird breeding area and a concentration point for migrating birds in the spring and fall. The Fundy tides provide excellent opportunities for the study of marine ecosystems.

Our view is not limited to the Maine coast, however. Bowdoin’s ES faculty are involved in research and public policy initiatives affecting the rest of Maine and New England, including river restoration, management of ground fisheries, habitat protection, and sustainable agriculture. Maine also frames the creative work of several participating faculty painters, photographers, architects, and writers.

Alumni Network

The Environmental Studies Program has an active alumni network as a resource for students.
Environmental Studies

Honors Projects

Recent projects completed by environmental studies majors include:

- Into the Den: My Search for the West
- Toward Collaboration on the Androscoggin River: Evolving Norms in Environmental Governance
- Gateway to the Forest City?: Portland, Maine’s Bayside Neighborhood, 1866-2014
- Roadkill: The Battle to Start and Stop Maine’s East-West Highway
- Planning the Motor City: The Influence of the Big Three on Detroit’s Urban Landscape
- Food Hats: Acting Locally, Producing Regionally and Thinking Collaboratively in Vermont and Maine
- A Degeneracy of the Old New England Stock: Northern New England’s Poor Farms in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
- Battered Alewives and the long climb to recover
- Addressing barriers to entry into farmer’s markets faced by the low income: SNAP programs in Maine farmer’s markets
- What Makes an Electric Utility Good? Economic Motivations for Clean Electricity Deployment in American States
- Recovery of the Kennebec River Estuary: an Ecological and Ethical Review
- Impacts of Pasture and Organic Crop Land Use Practices on Soil Carbon Storage in Midcoast Maine
- Environmental Correlates of Seeding Recruitment on Kent Island (New Brunswick, Canada) and Resulting Management Implications

For more information, go to: bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/

Environmental Studies Program, B.S. (Northern Illinois), Ph.D. (Minnesota), teaches introductory and core courses, and courses on local and global ecology.

Jill E. Pearlman, senior lecturer in environmental studies, B.A. (Beloit), M.A. (California), Ph.D. (Chicago), teaches courses on architecture and urban development.

Erik Nelson, assistant professor of economics, B.A. (Boston College), M.A. (Minnesota), Ph.D. (Minnesota) teaches course on environmental economics and economics of land use change.

Collin Roesler, associate professor of earth and oceanographic science, B.S. (Brown), M.S. (Oregon), Ph.D. (Washington), teaches introductory oceanography, ocean ecosystem, and oceans impact on climate.

Lawrence H. Simon, associate professor of philosophy and environmental studies, A.B. (Pennsylvania), A.B. (Cambridge), Ph.D. (Boston University), teaches introductory and core courses, as well as courses on environmental ethics and philosophy.


Dharni Vasudevan, professor of chemistry and environmental studies, B.S. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), M.S., Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins), teaches introductory and core courses, and environmental chemistry.


Revised September 2014

for exploration of a topic or a senior capstone course experience of one semester. The minor in environmental studies consists of five courses: Introduction to Environmental Studies; two courses at the intermediate level or higher, one of which should be outside a student’s departmental major; and two core courses.

Fellowship Opportunities

The Psi Upsilon Environmental Fellowship Program is a ten-week paid fellowship that places students either with a Maine based non-profit organization such as The Nature Conservancy or regional land trust, or local government. ES majors can also receive funding for a fellowship placement either domestically or internationally with an organization of their choosing through the Psi Upsilon Sustainability and Environmental Justice fellowship program. The Cooke Research Fellowship provides funding for community-engaged research.

Faculty

The following faculty are members of the Environmental Studies Program Committee. In addition, adjunct lecturers teach courses in environmental law, fisheries, and environmental education. Bowdoin professors teach courses in multiple disciplines that are cross-listed with environmental studies.


Phil Camill, Rusask Professor of Environmental Studies and Earth and Oceanographic Studies, B.A. (Tennessee), Ph.D. (Duke), teaches about global climate change, biogeochemistry, and the history of agriculture.

David Carlon, associate professor of biology, director of the Bowdoin College Coastal Studies Center, B.A. (Boston University), M.S. (Massachusetts–Boston), Ph.D. (New Hampshire), teaches courses on ocean ecosystems, marine biodiversity, and climate change.

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call: Dean of Admissions Bowdoin College, 5000 College Station Brunswick, ME 04011-8441 207-725-3100 bowdoin.edu admissions@bowdoin.edu

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